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ABSTRACT

The factors or variables that contribute to the academic success of limited English proficient students in three schools in New York City were studied. Researchers studied two elementary schools and one high school with successful bilingual education programs. A team of five researchers visited the schools, observed bilingual classes, interviewed bilingual students and their teachers, administrators, and parents, analyzed test data and other academic records, and evaluated student work. Teachers also completed questionnaires about the programs. Results indicated that each school has its own unique characteristics, but that 10 areas were present in all 3 schools: (1) positive school climate; (2) an administration with leadership and commitment to bilingual education; (3) teachers' high expectations of students; (4) teacher effectiveness and empowerment; (5) clearly defined curricula; (6) extracurricular and co-curricular activities; (7) high student self-esteem and expectations of themselves; (8) academic growth; (9) satisfactory attendance; and (10) parental involvement. In the successful programs, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel are constantly questioning their techniques and academic support to the bilingual program. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

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MEASURING SUCCESS IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: CASE STUDIES OF EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

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Demographic changes in the United States have brought educational and social issues related to language and academic learning. Educators across the nation are facing the challenge of educating students with whom they cannot easily communicate because of language, cognitive and cultural differences. A major challenge confronting these educators is the identification of appropriate instruction to insure academic achievement of limited English proficient (LEP) students. No matter what criterion is used (grades, tests scores, dropout rates, college acceptance rates), linguistically and culturally diverse students in general, do not perform as well as their majority group counterparts in school (Council of Chief State Officers, 1990; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1993; National Educational Goals Panel, 1996). School failure persists among a disproportionate number of language minority students. With the exception of some Asian groups (especially Chinese, Koreans and Japanese) a disproportionate number of linguistically and culturally diverse students do not reach acceptable achievement levels in English literacy, reading, mathematics, or science. In addition, many of these students come from low socio economic backgrounds. Academic surveys of academic achievement conclude that there exist achievement disparities among students from differing family, socioeconomic, ethnic and language backgrounds and that these students are at risk of academic failure. However, students bring to the educational setting, knowledge, skills, and personal (linguistic, cultural, cognitive) characteristics and strengths which can help educators to plan and implement effective instructional programs. Recent literature has pointed toward institutional, school reforms and resources that define and contribute to students' academic success (August & Hakuta, 1997; August & Pease- Alvarez, 1996). Bilingual instruction in the students' native

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language and in English has been mentioned as one of the ways to effectively instruct LEP students.

Classrooms that have linguistically and culturally diverse students reflect a broad variety of linguistic and cultural differences. Educators need to plan to provide LEP students with an appropriate school environment, professionally and motivated certified teachers, challenging instructional experiences that take into consideration students' linguistic and academic levels and cultures (Faltis, 1993). Research and theory (Carrasquillo, 1995; Faltis, 1993; Garcia, 1993; Ramirez, 1992) suggest that effective teaching to linguistically and culturally diverse students would require educators to be knowledgeable about the principles of second language acquisition, bilingualism, students' cultural backgrounds, cognitive and learning styles, and experiences, to establish different and varied instructional classroom strategies to meet these students' growing needs. For example, research indicates that utilizing a variety of interactive teachers' methods allow teachers to better instruct students with varying learning/cognitive styles, and individual differences thereby engaging all students in learning (August & Hakuta, 1997; August & Pease-Alvarez, 1996; Garcia, 1993).

How can educators contribute to improve language minority students' performance? Educators need to concentrate on the whole student, the quality and quantity of school experiences, challenging curricula and instruction which focuses on the development of the cognitive processes used in critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. These strategies teach students how to think and act when planning, executing, and evaluating performance on a task. These strategies also serve as a mediating link between the application of basic skills to the mastery of content material. But teachers need training in challenging students who have or do not have proficiency in the English language, especially in reading and writing. In addition, educators need to find ways to communicate to each student that his/her special ability/quality/language/culture is understood, and valued. There is a group of researchers and educators who suggest that bilingual education is one of the most successful instructional programs to successfully educate students for whom English is not their native/first language (August & Pease-Alvarez, 1996; Garcia, 1993; Ramirez, 1992). But in some cities/areas of the United States, research on the effectiveness of bilingual education is limited.

New York City lacks information on the effectiveness of bilingual education programs. In addition, the media has presented a one sided view of New York City bilingual education programs, mainly emphasizing misconceptions and negative information (i.e.; bilingual education is confusing to students; bilingual students who are in bilingual programs are only taught in students' native language; parents are forced to enroll their children in bilingual programs). However, we have worked in and evaluated bilingual programs in

New York City for more than twenty years and have come across effective bilingual programs. Effectiveness is measured through increased English language skills, satisfactory academic performance in core subjects, satisfactory school attendance and positive students self-image.

Setting and Participants

Because of the lack of research on bilingual education programs in New York City, the authors decided to research three schools who have been cited in the educational forum and in the media for implementing successful bilingual programs. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors/variables that have contributed to the academic success of limited English proficient students enrolled in those three schools. The investigators approached two elementary schools and one high school principal and asked them permission to research their bilingual education programs. A research team of three individuals plus the two principal investigators visited the schools, observed bilingual classes, interviewed bilingual students, teachers, administrators and parents, analyzed students standardized test data and other academic records, and evaluated students' projects/products. In addition, a questionnaire was mailed to all bilingual teachers and monolingual teachers working in the bilingual program with the purpose of identifying the teachers' perceptions on the factors contributing to the success of the bilingual program in each of the schools. Students' academic data (standardized and informal tests scores), were analyzed comparing the bilingual students' scores with the scores of students in similar schools of New York City. The data from the interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaire were categorized, and analyzed.

Findings

The results of this study indicated that each school has its own uniqueness in terms of school leadership, staff, students' characteristics, curricula and instructional approaches. However, there were ten areas that were present in the three schools. These were (a) positive school climate, (b) administrations' school leadership and commitment to bilingualism and Bilingual Education, (c) teachers' high expectations of students, (d) teachers' effectiveness and empowerment, (e) clearly and defined curriculum, (f) extra-curricular/ co-curricular activities, (g) students' high self-esteem/students' high expectations of themselves, (h) students' academic growth, (i) students' satisfactory attendance, and (j) quality of parental involvement. Below is a description of the ten variables that were identified as factors contributing to the success of bilingual programs.

Positive School Climate/Administration's School Leadership

The positive climate of the schools seemed to contribute to the success of the bilingual program. Parents, students, staff members and teachers expressed that the schools were kept clean, in good repair and provided a secure and safe place to learn. Different from other schools, there are no metal detectors to check students and staff. The school halls and lobbies reflected the multicultural and multilingual curriculum of the school. The data also indicated that the students, teachers and other staff members were proud of their school, felt respected by one another and showed a friendly relationship. In addition, we observed a team-work effort between the monolingual and bilingual teachers who worked together to plan and implement innovated ideas in their school because many of them shared the same goals. There was also interaction between monolingual and bilingual students. They ate together, took classes together, went on trips together and participated in social/educational activities together.

The philosophy of the school is one that promotes respect, and supports bilingualism and bilingual education to meet the linguistic and academic needs of each student. The data indicated that there is support and dedication toward the bilingual program beginning from the superintendent's office, the principals, the supervisors, and from school staff members. There is on-going staff development to better prepare teachers to teach in the bilingual program. There is also availability of bilingual instructional materials. In addition, there are smaller groups for classroom instruction. The teachers also receive support from the community, and the parents. For example, the PTA provides moral support as well as support to schools being able to accomplish several instructional or leadership tasks.

Teachers' High Expectations of Students and Individual Empowerment

Teachers' high expectation of students seemed to contribute to the success of the bilingual programs. The teachers and all the staff of the school emphasize students' successes rather than students' failures. It was the belief of all members of the school community that the school's goal is to provide students with an excellent education with high standards so that they may fulfill their potential and become productive members of society. In the three schools, it was found that teachers motivated, encouraged, supported and expected a high degree of efforts and accomplishments from their students by providing a challenging curriculum with high standards.

The data showed that the teachers are effective with their students because they view their students as top priority by teaching some strategies that will make

learning easier. In addition, teachers teach by taking into consideration different learning styles that would make learning more individualized for the students. The Annual School Report indicated that approximately 80% of the school staff were fully licensed and permanently assigned to the schools.

The data showed that teachers empowered students to be successful by giving them the tools they need to learn. For example, they empower the students to be successful by preparing them to learn in both languages in a caring manner. They provide a quality education and an enriching curriculum for their students in both languages. Teachers have the flexibility to use various approaches to accommodate students needs.

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum of the school seemed to contribute to the success of the bilingual program. The administrators facilitate the provision of a rich, challenging curriculum which promotes high standards and allow the teachers the flexibility of modifying or creating a curriculum that would address the needs of the students in their school. It also allows the teachers to use a variety of teaching approaches including a creative instructional methodology. Teachers share their ideas with each other, implement strategies which have been successful to other teachers. They also provide opportunities to excel by focusing on the students' strengths as a medium of effective academic development. Assessment/evaluation is determined by the quality of work (notebook and portfolios and checklist) students show as well as by their score on standardized tests.

Extra-Curricular, Co-Curricular Activities

The extra-curricular, co-curricular activities seemed to contribute to the success of the bilingual program. A significant number of students were attending the after school program to enhance their English and other basic skills. There were a variety of extra-curricular, co-curricular activities for everyone from gym to literature, music, sports, health care, child abuse to leadership clubs through ASPIRA (a non-profit organization promoting Latino students' leadership). In addition, some of the schools provided dinners, dances, movies, and trips for the students and parents.

Students' Positive Self-Esteem/High Expectation of Themselves

The data indicated that students have confidence and feel good about themselves. Students have high expectations of themselves. Students are learning in their own language which builds their self-esteem and also validates their home

language, culture and ethnic background. For example, during the classroom observations, it was noted that students were actively involved in the lesson. They raised their hands and participated in the lesson, they took turns, and were well-behaved. Teachers engaged students in the lesson by asking questions or providing a variety of activities related to the topic. Teachers' discussions centered around the students' experiences, reading and knowledge of the area under discussion. Teachers reinforced vocabulary skills in Spanish by asking the students to give other sophisticated words as synonyms or antonyms. They also provided opportunities to provide the English translation and or examples of the use of the vocabulary words in sentences. Students have high expectations of themselves such as wanting to go to Ivy League University and entering highly academic demanding professions.

Students' Academic Growth

The data indicated that students' academic growth was measured by their ability to learn in two languages, and the ability of the program to use the students' native language. Students also learned how to read and write in both languages as well as demonstrating knowledge in the content areas. The data also indicated that students' academic development have improved as shown by the results of informal assessments including portfolio, journal writing, checklists, quizzes, practice tests, class participation, observations, and individual records. Additional data information of students' academic growth were found in data from standardized tests. These data showed that students academically performed in English, in content areas and in the native language.

Students Satisfactory Attendance

The attendance of the students seemed to contribute to the success of the bilingual programs. For example, the data indicated that daily attendance was in the 90%, and most of the students were in school 95% to 100% of the time. The New York State School Report Card of each school reported that 90% of the students at the three schools demonstrated satisfactory attendance. For example, at the high school It was also reported that a small group of students (2.3%) of the student population was suspended. Teachers concluded that the factors contributing to good attendance were that: (a) students liked the school, (b) parents were involved in their children's education and they believe attendance was an important element to succeed, and (c) some students expressed that in order not to miss school content, they could not be absent.

Quality of Parental Involvement

School data indicated that parental involvement in educational activities were and are a key factor of successful bilingual programs. Two principals indicated that parental involvement was very successful in their schools. Parents were involved by attending regular PTA meetings, volunteering to help in the classrooms, assisting with health screenings, and with school security. In addition, the parents help during holiday activities, and field trips. Schools provided parents with the following services: ESL and Spanish as a Second Language instruction, leadership/involvement projects, computer workshops, Parents As Partners Reading Program, and parenting skills workshops.

In summary, the success of bilingual programs was based on the coordinated efforts of parents, teachers and the administration of the school. Schools promoted bilingualism and had made available several different types of bilingual programs to LEP students providing these students with a challenging curriculum in Spanish and English. The three main factors contributing to the success of the schools were: (a) the leadership of the school, reflected in a positive school climate, (b) the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers reflected in high expectations for their students and a challenging curriculum, and (c) support and commitment of the parents in collaborating with school goals and challenges.

Indicators of Successful Bilingual Programs

In this study, indicators of successful bilingual programs were generated by analyzing data using teachers, parents, and administrators interviews, school data (standardized tests, school report cards, official memorandums) and field observations. In measuring successful bilingual programs, several criteria/ indicators need to be looked at. These are school climate, school administration, expectations of students, quality of the bilingual program, curriculum, activities provided by the school to enrich students' academic curriculum and life, students' own motivation, and the quality of parental involvement. The findings of this study helped the research team to conclude that: (a) successful bilingual programs are part of successful schools and (b) the involvement of the administration in the planning and implementation of the bilingual program is a key factor in the success of the bilingual program.

In successful schools, academic success is expected from all students enrolled in the school, including English language learners. A successful school is one in which students enter its doors mentally prepared to do school work. Students, teachers, parents and the administrative staff recognize that the main

objective of the school is to emphasize learning in all subject areas. The efforts of the principal, teachers and parents are geared toward helping students to achieve and do well in school. The school's primary goal is the attainment of academic development, and the school's mission is to provide opportunities for the students to demonstrate their academic development. The whole school community celebrates students' individual and collective achievement. Parents are informed of students' successes as well as their difficulties, and they receive praise when their children excel and receive help when their children need help to accomplish the academic tasks. Schools' efforts go into making all students successful learners. To accomplish these goals, educators provide challenging programs to help at-risk students, limited-English-proficient students, academically average students, as well as talented students. Thus, an effective school is one with dedicated parents, effective educators, and successful students.

The involvement of the administration in the planning and implementation of the bilingual program is a key factor in the success of the program. As we found in the three schools studied, the role of the administration is the most important factor in the success of the bilingual program. Carrasquillo and London (1993) identified successful principals as those who run the school in such a way that promotes: (a) the highest quality of learning and teaching, (b) a safe and orderly school, (c) a well-planned and well-developed curriculum, (d) a strong parental involvement program, and (e) a plan to recognize academic excellence among all students and teachers of the school. The principal is the chief instructional teacher of the school, and perhaps of the whole community. The main objective of the school is the full development of each student's character and intellect, personal and social relationships, and academic achievement. Thus, the school is an institution interested in students as persons and in their total development. Children, youth, and adults attend school to become successful learners; that is, to increase their knowledge of facts and skills and to develop thinking strategies. If learning is demonstrated in these areas, it is said that there were desirable outcomes of schooling.

As in the case of the administration of the three described schools administrators of successful schools respect racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity by infusing the consideration of diversity into instruction and by reflecting it in the composition of the school's staff, in extra-curricular activities of the school, and in the total ambiance of the school. All students need to have instructional experiences that include the study of the cultures and the contributions of different histories, including the struggles by which diverse groups have sought to become full participants in the American society (London, & Carrasquillo 1993). Effective administrators plan and provide adequate educational experiences for non-English or limited-English-proficient students. Adequate educational experiences mean that the school evaluates the students'

linguistic strengths and weaknesses, and provides programs in which the students' strengths are used as a medium of effective academic and social development. These administrators recognize that LEP students need to be instructed in the language that they know best so that they can learn skills and concepts in reading, mathematics, social studies, and science in the same way that their English-speaking counterparts learn them. For limited-English-proficient students or non-English-speaking students, it is more efficient to learn these subjects by using their native, or dominant language as the medium of instruction. At the same, time, they need a challenging curriculum to learn the English language necessary for success in school. Schools must provide a challenging and motivating curriculum to all students, including those who do not initially speak the language of the school. By providing instructional experiences through bilingual education and English as a second language, the school is ensuring that adequate learning experiences are available to all students.

Instructional leadership in the described schools implied that the principal is the instructional leader of the school and he/she demonstrates the effectiveness of his/her leadership so that every student is capable of making significant progress in achievement as well as in social and emotional behavior. The first priority of the school is to make sure that all students enrolled in the school learn to the maximum of their potential. All individuals in positions of authority in the school need to make every possible effort for the students to achieve in every subject area. But as shown in the three schools described in this study, the most important leader of the school is the principal who leads the other administrators of the school and the teachers to accomplish the school's short and long-term objectives.

All students are capable of learning and all students are entitled to quality educational experiences. To be effective, a bilingual program need not bring all students to identical levels of mastery, but it must bring a high percentage of students to an agreed-upon, acceptable minimum level of mastery. The school staff believes that the school controls the conditions that lead to success. The school staff and the principal need to be committed to the idea that all students can master basic skills and go beyond the skills to more challenging and abstract ones. Therefore, every effort is made in school to expect the achievement of basic skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, and to actively teach these skills using whatever strategies or materials prove most effective.

In successful bilingual programs parents, teachers, and administrators and other school personnel are constantly questioning their teaching and academic support to the bilingual program and to students enrolled in the bilingual programs. All educators are continually challenged to do more for culturally and linguistically diverse students. The words of one of the principals of the schools

we observed, summarize this continuing challenge and preoccupation. As the principal said:

"Although we are well on our way to truly becoming a school of excellence, much work remains to be done. We are greatly encouraged by the recognition, and are more committed than ever to achieve world-class standards. But these lofty goals are unattainable unless each student individually commits to the highest standards, expectations and achievements. Working together, (teachers, students and parents), there is nothing which we can't attain."

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